

Kolby Kelleher



# THE CITIZEN

KEY WEST

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## Conchs beat rival Coral Shores — Page 1B

STILL 50¢

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#### WEATHER



Lucas Maurer, fifth grade, The Basilica School

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#### FLORIDA KEYS

##### Hospital board adds 2 members

Lower Keys residents now have two additional voices on the board of the local hospital.

## Too many cars; too few solutions

BY SCOTT UNGER  
Key West Citizen

A meeting of the minds Thursday at City Hall concluded traffic problems at the entrance to Key West are complicated and there's no easy fix to the congestion.

The meeting was organized by Key West Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President Virginia Panico and featured rep-

resentatives from the Florida Department of Transportation, Monroe County Sheriff's Office, Key West Police Department, local businesses and city staff along with County Mayor George Neugent and Key West Mayor Craig Cates.

Panico organized the meeting because of first-hand accounts and com-

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BRIAN BASHAM/The Citizen  
A Key West police officer observes traffic at the Triangle, the intersection of U.S. 1 and Roosevelt Boulevard, earlier this week. The department is stepping up patrolling and observing rush-hour traffic near the intersection due to recent complaints about driving behaviors there.



## Cars

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plaints from residents that long delays and aggressive driving at the Triangle and surrounding areas are causing problems for businesses and residents in town, she said.

"The traffic is getting unbelievable and people are getting very aggravated," she said. "We've all been through it so what can we do about it?"

FDOT consultant Elio Espino detailed the department's planned short-term fix for the Triangle, which involves moving the island crosswalk to the west to make the pedestrian crossing one continuous movement instead of the current setup that involves stopping at the island.

In addition, the right-turn lanes entering and exiting the island will be "free flow" or continuous, unless a pedestrian activates the signal. The crossing signals will also be delayed and shortened to maximize the flow of traffic, Espino said.

The changes will add 10 seconds to the current 110-second loop it takes for the lights to cycle through, but the extra time is negligible and will allow greater traffic flow because more cars will fit into each green light, he said.

The problem with the fix is that work won't begin until June due to a 120-day wait time for equipment and the construction effort needed to move the crosswalk, which may require closing portions of the road, according to FDOT Senior Project Engineer Jackie Hart.

Business owner Mark Rossi and Chamber



FDOT consultant Elio Espino detailed the department's planned short-term fix for the Triangle, which involves moving the island crosswalk to the west to make the pedestrian crossing one continuous movement instead of the current setup that involves stopping at the island.

President Greg Sullivan suggested an elevated walkway for pedestrians; however, Espino said that project would present additional roadblocks such as Americans with Disabilities Act compliance and space issues. Even if those issues were resolved, it would be several years before construction could begin, he said.

KWPD Chief Donie Lee's main concern is synchronizing the lights on U.S.1 to provide better traffic flow.

Officers have been manually controlling the signals during afternoon rush hour, but manpower issues make that an untenable permanent solution, Lee said.

"I don't believe the lights are synched where they're

all green at the same time and if they are, the traffic will flow better," he said. "What's helping the most is us in the intersection, opening up the free flow."

Fixing that issue presents similar problems to the Triangle because FDOT will need to wait 120 days for new controller equipment, Hart said.

The current controller boxes have GPS units that would synchronize the lights but the technology is incompatible with the archaic controllers the lights currently operate on, she said.

The lights can be recalibrated in the short term but the old clocks inside the controller units tend to lose time and become out of sync, Espino said.

KWPD Capt. J.R. Torres said his team made 31 traffic stops in an attempt to control aggressive driving, but the stops only led to more congestion, so the officers began manually operating the lights. The department is partnering with the MCSO to control the flow during peak hours in the short term, Torres said.

Key West City Manager Jim Scholl said the road's Level of Service has been over capacity for years and there are simply too many cars on the island.

The solution requires a multifaceted approach that includes synchronizing all the lights and bringing in new technology, he said.

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